

The
Little Treasure

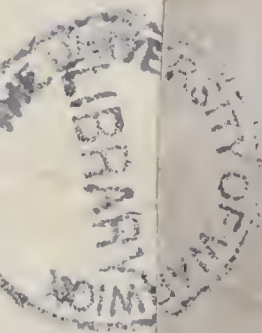
Comedy in 2 acts

By
A Harris

1855

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THE
LITTLE TREASURE

A COMEDY

IN TWO ACTS

BY

A. HARRIS.

*Author of The Avalanche; Too Much of a Good Thing;
Betty Martin; Fairy Page; Our Nurse; Dorothy, &c. &c.*

THOMAS HAILES LACY,
WELLINGTON STREET,
STRAND,
LONDON.

THE LITTLE TREASURE.

*First performed at the Theatre Royal Haymarket, on Thursday,
October 11th, 1855.*

CHARACTERS.

Sir Charles Howard		Mr. HOWE.
Captain Walter Maydenblush		Mr. BUCKSTONE.
The Honourable Mr. Leicester Fluttermore		Mr. VILLIERS.
Mr. Allembourne	(his friend.)	Mr. BRAID.
Lady Florence Howard		Miss SWANBOROUGH.
Gertrude	{ daughter of Sir Charles and Lady Howard. }	Miss BLANCHE FANE
Mrs. Meddleton		Mrs. POYNTER.
Jane	(Servant.)	Mrs. ELLIS.
<i>Thomas, servant to Sir Charles Mr. Wilson</i>		
<i>John, servant to Lady Florence, Burgess</i>		

COSTUMES.

SIR CHARLES.—1st dress, Black velvet morning jacket, lined with red silk; fancy trousers and waistcoat. 2nd dress, Evening dress suit.

CAPTAIN WALTER.—1st dress, Grey morning jacket, white trousers, fancy waistcoat. 2nd dress, Evening suit.

THE HONOURABLE LEICESTER FLUTTERMORE.—Evening suit.

ALLEMBOURNE.—Evening suit.

Three or four GUESTS.—Dress suits.

SERVANTS.—Neat Liveries.

LADY HOWARD.—Silver grey silk dress.

GERTRUDE.—White and blue muslin dress.

MRS. MEDDLETON.—Dark blue silk brocade.

JANE.—Coloured muslin, black silk apron.

THE LITTLE TREASURE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*An elegantly furnished saloon in a villa at Richmond; at back a terrace looking upon a picturesque garden. All the entrances from centre doors.*

LADY FLORENCE is discovered working at an embroidery frame L. C., MRS. MEDDLETON is reading the paper near the fire, L. 3 E.; GERTRUDE is standing near a table at L. C., attentively examining a map.

GERTRUDE. (*suddenly raising her head.*) Mamma!

LADY. F. Well, dear.

GERT. Is it very far to India?

LADY. F. To what part of India do you allude, my child?

GERT. To the part where papa lives.

MRS. M. (*aside—angrily.*) Papa! there she goes again.

LADY. F. (*embarrassed.*) Your father?

GERT. Yes mamma, did you not tell me the other day that he was in India?

LADY. F. (*embarrassed.*) Doubtless, but he is not confined to any particular spot or country, he is travelling upon business.

GERT. He never seems to write to us. How is it, mamma, that he never writes to us?

LADY F. I—I don't know, my dear.

GERT. It's very strange that he should be always travelling, and that neither his wife, nor his mother-in-law, nor his daughter should ever hear from him. Oh, I should so like to see him. I'm sure I should love him very dearly. (LADY FLORENCE rises and crosses R.; MRS. MEDDLETON taps uneasily with her foot.) But what is the matter with you both?

LADY F. I—I have a slight headache.

MRS M. And I—a—a—distracting toothache.

GERT. There, that's what you always say whenever I speak about papa; well, well, I'll change the subject, I may perhaps be permitted to ask after another traveller, my cousin Walter?

LADY F. (R.) I received a letter from him this very morning, informing me that he had left the army, and expected to reach England almost as soon as his letter.

GERT. He's coming back, then; how glad I am; he's such a good tempered, kind, dear fellow.

MRS. M. (*lays down paper and comes down L.*) Yes, yes, that's the way with you little girls; it only requires a few compliments to make them prefer an utter stranger to the parents, the relations who devote their lives to them,

GERT. (*indignantly.*) Grandma how can you talk so? My cousin is not a stranger, and never paid me a compliment in all his life! If you go on in this way, you'll soon be jealous of my little canary. By-the-bye that reminds me, I haven't given the poor little fellow anything to eat to-day! (*laughing.*) Good bye, cross, ill-natured granny. (*kisses her.*) Good bye, dear mamma! (*kissing her.*) You've no idea how handsome you look this morning. (*stops at back, kisses her hand to the two ladies and runs off, c. and L.*)

MRS. M. (L.) That child is growing quite a woman. We must soon think of finding a husband for her.

LADY F. (R.) And in our painful position, I fear it will be no easy task to find one worthy of her.

MRS. M. And why, I should like to know? Because you are separated from your husband? Pshaw, the thing's an every day occurrence. Besides the fault was not on your side; no sooner had the birth of little Gertrude made Sir Charles a father, than he complained that her cry of "papa" distracted him—that the sight of a child in long clothes shocked his ideas of the picturesque. I suppose he'd have his daughter come into the world in full ball costume, with short sleeves and deep flounces, and although he had a charming wife, and a little one of four years old, it was evident that domestic happiness possessed no charms for him—besides, no woman in her senses would ever dream of a reconciliation with a man who, for twelve years, has so completely estranged himself.

LADY F. True mother, you are right.

MRS. M. Then why regret him, as you appear to do? As for suitors for our Gertrude, I promise you they'll not be wanting; leave that to me; I'm wealthy enough to take upon myself the responsibility of finding a good match for her.

Enter WALTER, C. *from R. followed by a* SERVANT.

WALTER. (*without.*) I tell you it is perfectly unnecessary.

SERVANT. (*announcing.*) Captain Walter Maydenblush.

WALTER. (*to SERVANT.*) There, now I hope you're satisfied. [*Exit SERVANT C. and R.*]

LADY F. What—Walter!

MRS. M. Himself, I declare!

WALTER. (*comes down C.*) Your servant, in his extreme zeal, would insist upon announcing me; now, will you believe it, the very idea of being announced so reacts upon my constitutional shyness, that it almost incapacitates me from entering the room at all. However, dear ladies, allow me to express my happiness at seeing you, after so long an absence.

LADY F. (R. C.) So you've returned to us at last?

WALTER. (C.) And for good this time, I promise you.

MRS. M. (L.) What tired of soldiering. Why formerly fire and smoke seemed indispensable to your existence!

WALTER. Yes, but you see my confounded bashfulness has interfered with my career, from the very onset. I shall never forget my college examination! The very sight of the half dozen professors, looking like an empannelled jury took my breath away! I stuttered and stammered and made such odd answers, that I quite puzzled my judges. One of them, evidently wishing to indulge in a joke at my expense, asked me "Who was the author of Milton's Paradise Lost?" Will you believe it, I was in such an awful state of nervousness that, after puzzling my brain for several minutes, I replied, "I didn't know."

(*the LADIES laugh.*) However, in the army, I was acknowledged to be in my element, and as long as the fighting lasted it was all well enough: but the inactivity which followed induced me to sell out, and here I am, and

glad to see you both looking so well. (*to MRS. MEDDLETON.*)
Where's little Gertrude? At school, I suppose.

LADY F. Here she comes to answer for herself. (*goes up and round to MRS. MEDDLETON.*)

WALTTR. (*seeing her, surprised.*) Oh!

GERTRUDE *enters C. from L. and advances R.*

GERT. It is—I'm sure it is! I know I'm not mistaken! it's Cousin Walter. How delighted I am that you're come back again. What! have you nothing to say to me? (*reproachfully.*) Are you not going to kiss me?

WALTER. (*shyly.*) Why you see, Cousin Gertrude, you've grown so, and look so beautiful!

GERT. (*surprised.*) Well that needn't prevent you!

WALTER. No, no! If I was only certain that you would permit me!

GERT. Permit you! Of course I will! (*they embrace.*) But what ails you? how red you are!

WALTER. (*confused.*) I—Oh, indeed! I—I suppose it's the heat!

GERT. The heat! Why it's a very cold day!

WALTER. (*confused.*) Then it's the cold day.

(*the LADIES laugh.*)

GERT. Why Walter, you don't mean to say you're as shy as you used to be?

WALTER. Worse; especially at certain moments.

GERT. Then I assure you it's just the reverse with me. Since I've left school you can't think how bold I've grown.

WALTER. (*with more confidence.*) Oho! You've left school, have you? You're getting quite a young woman, now; how proud your papa must be of you.

GERT. Papa!

(*LADY FLORENCE and MRS. MEDDLETON cough significantly.*)

WALTER. (*innocently.*) What, ladies, have you coughs?

LADY F. No. It's the—the—

WALTER. The damp weather, doubtless. Yes, I met Sir Charles in Regent Street this morning. (*crossing to MRS. MEDDLETON.*)

LADY F. Indeed you must be mistaken.

WALTER. No, not I! I flatter myself I know him too intimately.

GERT. (*eagerly.*) You met my father, you say? (*joyfully.*) Then he has returned from India.

WALTER. (*puzzled.*) From India?

LADY F. (*aside to WALTER.*) Silence!

MRS. M. No, no! (*pinching him.*) No, not a word.

WALTER. (*aside, rubbing his arm.*) Confound it! the old lady is strong in the fingers. (*going to c.*)

GERT. (*aside.*) What can be the meaning of all this mystery?

LADY F. Gertrude, it must be time for you to take your drawing lesson.

MRS. M. (*going up towards c.*) Yes, child, we had better go and see whether your drawing master is come.

GERT. (*pouting.*) No, no! I'd rather stay with my cousin.

MRS. M. Come, child, come!

GERT. (*aside.*) I shall see him again presently, and then I'll make him tell me all! (*makes signs indicating that he is to await her return.*)

[*Exeunt with MRS. MEDDLETON C. and L.*]

WALTER. (*R. aside.*) What on earth can she mean by those signs?

LADY F. (*L.*) Walter, how could you be so imprudent as to speak of Sir Charles before Gertrude?

WALTER. Ten thousand pardons, my dear Lady Florence, for my forgetfulness; but is it possible that during my long absence no reconciliation has taken place between you?

LADY F. You must surely know that under existing circumstances reconciliation is impossible.

WALTER. I had hoped to find it otherwise. Is Gertrude still ignorant of the real state of the case?

LADY F. She is. You can easily understand how difficult it would have been to explain so delicate a subject to so young a girl.

WALTER. I confess it would have puzzled me considerably.

LADY F. You will be careful, therefore, never to allude to the circumstances again in her presence. And now let us

change the subject. You have left the army, you say; well, what are your plans? Do you intend to adopt another profession, or have you made up your mind to marry and settle?

WALTER. As regards the choice of a profession, I'm thinking of selecting that of a "Gentleman about Town," being the only one for which no special qualifications are required. As for marriage, thanks to my bashfulness, I must give up that idea: I've made a few attempts in my time, but all with the same result. I got on pretty well until the awful moment arrived when I had to pop the momentous question—I blushed, stammered, and broke down in the neat little speech I had concocted for the occasion, while the lady, not knowing what on earth I meant to say, only laughed at me, and then it was all over with me; so I've made up my mind to remain a bachelor until the end of my days, unless I should be fortunate enough to meet with a lady who will reverse the order of things, and ask *me* to marry *her*.

LADY F. (*laughing.*) Such a thing may happen—who knows?

John
Enter SERVANT^x C. from R.

SERVANT. Mrs. Montague is in the drawing-room, and desires to see your ladyship.

LADY F. I will join her immediately. [*Exit SERVANT, C. and R.—to WALTER.*] By-the-bye, Walter, you must make the acquaintance of this lady—a neighbour of ours—a charming young widow. I'll ask her to dine with us; you'll remain, of course, and I'll introduce you.

WALTER. Many thanks, but I—I hate introductions. No, no, I rather think I've business this evening—(*confused.*) on change.

LADY F. I'll take no excuse, you must remain. Don't be alarmed; we'll do all the talking; we shall not expect you to utter a syllable. [*Exit, laughing, C. and R.*]

Enter GERTRUDE, cautiously, C. from R. down L.

GERT. (*in a loud whisper.*) Walter!

WALTER. What, is it you, my little dear—I mean Miss Gertrude?

GERT. (*mysteriously.*) I've seized the opportunity to speak to you alone.

WALTER. To me?

GERT. Hush! The moments are precious. (*brings down two chairs, and forces him to sit opposite her in the middle of the stage.*) Now, then, listen to me. I know for certain that a secret has been kept from me for many years. You are in possession of that secret, and must instantly confess the whole truth.

WALTER. A secret!

GERT. Yes, in which my father is concerned.

WALTER. (*aside.*) Hem! this is rather unpleasant.

GERT. I am certain that he is not in India; for I heard you say that you saw him in town this very morning.

WALTER. A—a—that's to say I *thought* I saw him.

GERT. Walter, you know you saw him, and I insist on your telling me why he never comes here.

WALTER. A—a—now really you know I have only just arrived from abroad; so it's utterly impossible I should know anything about the matter.

GERT. (*looking at him seriously.*) Walter, you're telling a fib.

WALTER. I—I assure you——

GERT. Walter, you've been talked over by mamma!

WALTER. (*confused.*) Really I—I——

GERT. (*earnestly.*) You've been bought up by grandma! (*coaxingly.*) Now, Walter—dear Walter, in the name of the friendship that you always appeared to bear me, I conjure you to answer me frankly.

WALTER. Inquisitive little rogue!

GERT. No, Walter; it's no idle curiosity which impels me. Remember, 'tis of my father that I am begging you to tell me. Have I not the right to know why I, his child, am still a stranger to him? (*crying.*) Do, Walter, do explain this mystery?

WALTER. (*aside.*) Poor girl!

GERT. (*tragically.*) And I'll swear never to repeat a word.

WALTER. You swear it? But no, 'tis needless (*aside.*) sooner or later, she must learn the truth, so I may as well

tell her now. (*aloud.*) Well, little cousin, I'll tell you all I know.

GERT. (*throwing her arms round his neck.*) That's a good, dear Walter.

WALTER. (*aside—embarrassed.*) What a remarkably nice girl she's grown to be sure.

GERT. (*very impatiently.*) Now—go on—go on.

WALTER. Well, then, you must know in the first place, that your father is not in India, and to my certain knowledge has never been there.

GERT. (*rises very much excited.*) I said so! I knew it! I was sure. (*sits.*) why then does he not live at home with us?

WALTER. (*embarrassed.*) Because—

GERT. (*impatiently.*) Because what?

WALTER. Because twelve years ago, some disagreement took place between your mother and him, they separated, and have lived apart ever since.

GERT. But what could have caused the quarrel—this long separation?

WALT. Why you see, your father married young, very young, too young! However, I by no mean assert that the fault was entirely on his side.

GERT. Then you mean to say, that mamma was in the wrong too.

WALTER. (*hastily.*) I didn't say that either! I'm inclined to believe that Mrs. Meddleton was in some way connected with the cause of the dispute.

GERT. Is it possible that you accuse my grandma!

WALTER. I—I—I accuse no one.

GERT. (*continuing.*) Dear old grandma, who never had a will of her own, and with whom I can do just what I please!

WALTER. I have not the slightest doubt that as a *grandma* Mrs. Meddleton is all that is mild and affectionate, but as a *mother-in-law*, there's no denying that her temper was by no means of the sweetest description, especially on rainy days. (*significantly.*) Now it happened to rain a great deal during the year eighteen hundred and forty three.

GERT. There must be other and more weighty reasons

than this; I implore you to tell me what can have separated my father from his home and family.

WALTER. What? Well, then, since you insist upon knowing the exact truth—it was you!

GERT. (*astonished.*) I?

WALTER. Yes, you! I did not like to say so at first, but the fact is your father could'n't bear children, and it so happened that when you were a child your character was rather a violent one. You've no idea what a frightful noise you used to make, especially when you were cutting your teeth; and when you were four years old and could'n't get everything you wanted, your screams were frightful.

GERT. (*much excited, and speaking at the top of her voice.*) That may be, but I am no longer a child. I never make a noise now, and I've got all my teeth; and, I say, that this separation must not—shall not continue! (*they rise.*)

WALTER. My dear Gertrude, I am entirely of your opinion! but, after all that has occurred, I know of one circumstance only which can ever re-unite your parents.

GERT. And that is?

WALTER. Your marriage.

GERT. My marriage! I don't understand you.

WALTER. Why, don't you see, that, to arrange preliminaries, it would be necessary that an interview should take place between your parents—this point once gained, who knows what this meeting might bring about?

GERT. Perhaps a reconciliation! An excellent idea?

WALTER. (*aside.*) One of the very few for which I can claim credit.

GERT. Then I *must* get married! (*eagerly.*) I'll get married directly.

WALTER. Gently—gently. A marriage can't be got up in this violent manner.

GERT. Why not?

WALTER. Why? In the first place, in order to get married, you will require—

GERT. (*impatiently.*) What—what?

WALTER. Oh—its only a trifle—a husband.

GERT. Is that all! Oh! I don't care who it is! I'll have whoever happens to turn up!

WALTER. (*aside.*) Upon my word she doesn't seem at all particular.

GERT. I—I'll have *you*.

WALTER. (*aside.*) The devil you will.

GERT. Yes! you'll do admirably! and the thing can be settled at once!

WALTER. (*aside.*) By Jove! she's popping the question to me!

GERT. (*coaxingly.*) If you don't like me, Walter—sacrifice yourself, for my sake!

WALTER. Not like you! lor bless you! if I had only the courage, I would confess—I almost love you.

GERT. Then the thing's settled!

WALTER. But don't you think—

GERT. The thing's settled, I tell you! Here comes Mamma, you had better ask her permission at once.

Enter LADY FLORENCE, C. from R.

WALTER. Really, I—I (*aside.*) 'Pon my life, I'm all in a flutter.

LADY F. (*down L.*) So, so, Gertrude has been keeping your company during my absence! Well, have you renewed your former friendship?

WALTER. (*C. awkwardly.*) Yes; oh, yes!

LADY F. Still quite a child, is she not?

WALTER. Not exactly.

LADY F. Why, Walter, what's the matter with you?

WALTER. With me? oh dear, nothing! on the contrary, I—I—

GERT. (*R. aside.*) Well, why don't you begin at once?

LADY F. Something remarkable seems to have occurred during my absence.

GERT. (*aside.*) Dear, dear! how slow he is! (*aloud.*) Yes, mamma, something very remarkable *has* occurred. Walter was just saying as you came in, that he had a matter of the utmost importance to communicate to you.

LADY F. Indeed, Walter; let me hear it, I beg. (*GERTRUDE takes chair to L., LADY FLORENCE sits R. of L. table.*)

GERT. (*aside.*) Go on; mamma's listening.

WALTER. (*perplexed.—aside.*) I know she is; it's that that bothers me.

LADY F. Well, sir, I'm all attention.

WALTER. (*much confused.*) You see, Lady Florence, I—I'm rather embarrassed how to begin. I have no doubt—still, nevertheless—the sensibility of human nature—the organic feelings—having known one another so long, and friendship often ripens into—the general course of life—into— You don't seem to understand—

LADY F. Not very clearly, I confess.

GERT. (*aside.*) Explain yourself.

WALTER. (*aside to GERTRUDE.*) I am explaining myself. By Jupiter, how hot it is! When I left England—

GERT. (*aside.*) Where's he going now, I wonder?

WALTER. (*embarrassed.*) I was far from imagining—

GERT. (*interrupting him.*) “Far from imagining!” nonsense, sir! you mean, you had made up your mind.

LADY F. Proceed, proceed.

GERT. (*prompting him.*) and as I, on my side—

WALTER. And as she on her side!—

GERT. My cousin Gertrude—

WALTER. (*repeating.*) My cousin Gertrude!

LADY F. My dear children, I am just as much in the dark as ever! Will either of you oblige me by speaking a language that I can understand?

GERT. I will, Mamma. (*going to c.*)

WALTER. (*wiping his forehead with his pocket handkerchief.*) I'm very glad it's out of my hands.

GERT. The plain truth of the matter is, my cousin Walter loves me to distraction. I adore my cousin Walter, who was just imploring me to accept his hand and heart when your arrival terrified him. That's what you meant to say, Walter?

WALTER. Yes, that's what I meant to say; but couldn't say it!

LADY F. (*laughing.*) This is no doubt a very excellent joke; but—

GERT. Joke—it's no joke—is it Walter?

WALTER. I should rather think not!

LADY F. You really love my daughter?

WALTER. F—a—rantically!

LADY F. And she loves you?

GERT. P—passionately!

LADY F. But this mutual admiration appears to have been of rather sudden growth.

WALTER. Well, ra——

GERT. (*interrupting him.*) Not at all!

WALTER. Not at all!

GERT. We were devotedly attached to each other before Walter went abroad. At his departure we interchanged vows of eternal constancy, and on his return (*romantically.*) finding how faithfully I had kept my plighted word, he determined on immediately asking your consent to our union! Did'nt you Walter?

WALTER. Of course, I did? (*aside.*) The inventive powers of that young lady are positively wonderful!

LADY F. But, my dear Gertrude, when Walter left England you were——

GERT. Perhaps, mamma; but the esteem I had for my cousin as a child, is now—as he tried to say—ripened into a deep-rooted affection.

LADY F. (*seriously aside to GERTRUDE.*) Then you do really love him?

GERT. That I do, mamma.

LADY F. Walter is a good noble-hearted young man; I have always felt the greatest friendship and esteem for him; and if he is really sincere in seeking you for his wife——

GERT. Sincere! he assured me he intended to blow his brains out if you refused him; did'nt you, Walter?

WALTER. The fact is, I had made up my mind to blow out something.

LADY F. (*laughing.*) Well, then, I presume I must give my consent at once, if it's only to prevent bloodshed.

WALTER. (*aside.*) Then I presume I may consider myself a married man without any further trouble?

GERT. Oh! thank you, mamma! We are so delighted.

WALTER. It's astonishing *how* delighted we are.

GERT. There, Walter, that will do! Well, now that we've settled that little matter, let us talk of something else. I know that papa's in town—I know that he has never been to India; in short, I know all!

LADY F. (*reproachfully.*) Walter, how wrong of you.

GERT. Don't scold him, mamma; you could't expect him to have any secrets from his wife.

WALTER. Oh, no; could'nt have any secrets from——

GERT. Walter, that will do. (*to her mother.*) Dearest

manma, will not the marriage of your child bring about a reconciliation between *two persons* who, I am sure, must both equally desire it?

LADY F. (*sternly.*) A reconciliation? never!

GERT. If not a reconciliation, at any rate a meeting—an interview!

WALTER. Let me add my entreaties!

LADY F. No, no, 'tis impossible.

GERT. But I must have some one to give me away. I can't go to church on my wedding-day like an orphan, can I, Walter?

WALTER. Of course not. The prssence of the paternal parent is utterly indispensable.

GERT. There, mamma, you hear? Let me entreat you then to receive my father—for this once only, that you may give me your united blessing.

LADY F. Well, Gertrude, for your sake, and that of your husband, I consent to receive your father, and to confer with him, so far as *your* interests may render it necessary. That done, we are again strangers to each other. Believe me, Gertrude, this concession is the greatest proof of affection I could have given you.

(*goes up L.*)

GERT. Thanks, thanks, dear mamma; you have indeed made me happy. And Walter, too—eh, Walter? (WALTER *bows*—GERTRUDE *pinches him.*) Say something, will you? You don't look happy at all!

WALTER. (*starting and gesticulating violently.*) Happy! Bless you, I'm too happy!

GERT. Then you must go instantly and ask my father's consent.

WALTER. (*without moving.*) Another consent? Oh, very well.

GERT. I said "instantly," sir—you must start immediately.

WALTER. I'm gone—I'm gone. I'll just slip on a dress coat, a pair of white gloves, and, in less than an hour, I shall be in the presence of my father-in-law. (*aside.*) I never imagined I had half so much nerve. (*aloud—embracing* LADY FLORENCE.) Good bye, mother-in-law. (*embracing* GERTRUDE.) Good bye, little wife! (*just as*

he is going out, he meets MRS. MEDDLETON, who enters c. from L.—he embraces her.) Good bye, granny!

(runs off c. and L.

MRS. M. (R. H.) Why bless my soul, what's the matter with Walter? The young man has surely taken leave of his senses.

GERT. (c.) It's his joy at being married.

MRS. M. Married!

GERT. Yes, dear grandmama. We shall both be married on the same day—do you know why? Because we are going to marry one another.

MRS. M. (*much astonished.*) What do I hear?

LADY F. Yes, mother. It appears they have long entertained a mutual affection for each other; so I considered it my duty not to withhold my consent.

GERT. (*joyfully.*) And now we have only to obtain my father's, and then—

MRS. M. (*surprised.*) Your father's?

LADY F. She knows all, mother.

MRS. M. Dear, dear! Well, I suppose the consent of the father is necessary, as a matter of form. I'll write to him at once, and request that he will forward it by return of post. (*sits at table, R. H.*)

GERT. Now, grandma, mind you write him a nice, pretty little letter.

MRS. M. Yes, yes, yes—never fear! I know how to address the gentleman. (*writing.*) “Sir, your daughter's marriage is fixed for—” when shall I say? this day three weeks, eh?

GERT. Fortnight, grandma!

MRS. M. No, no, my dear, three weeks!

GERT. (*impatiently.*) Fortnight! fortnight! fortnight! It's my marriage—it's not yours; and I insist upon it being a fortnight.

MRS. M. Very well. A fortnight let it be. Now then, (*reading as she writes.*) “Sir, your daughter's marriage is fixed for this day fortnight; your consent, per return of post, will greatly facilitate the necessary preliminaries. Your obedient servant, Martha Meddleton.”

GERT. (*indignantly.*) You surely don't call that a letter? Why that's my notion of a summons; a notice of a law suit, or some such disagreeable matter.

Thomas. (Sir Charles's servant)

Enter χ SERVANT, C. from R., presenting a letter to
LADY FLORENCE.

SERVANT. A letter for your ladyship.

[Exit SERVANT, C. and R.]

LADY F. Heavens, 'tis from Sir Charles!

GERT. (*eagerly.*) From papa? Read it—quick! quick!

MRS. M. (*aside.*) What can that gentleman want now?

LADY F. (*reads.*) “Madam, as I am on the eve of a journey, the duration of which it is impossible for me at present to foresee, it would give me great pleasure to take with me the portrait of our child—our little Gertrude, whose image might assist to wile away many a weary hour. I cannot refrain from indulging the hope that you, to whom the original is always accessible, will not deny me the semblance of one that I hope will yet be a source of happiness to both. Believe me, madame, with much respect, Charles Howard.”

GERT. Is it possible that my father thinks of *me*? He loves me then? Mamma, why do you not answer me?

LADY F. (*wiping away a tear.*) I have nothing to say, Gertrude. I am glad, however, to find that your father has not forgotten his child.

GERT. (*taking letter from her mother and kissing it.*) Dear, darling letter!

MRS. M. (*sneeringly—rising and coming down R.*) It ought to be something superior; he has only been twelve years thinking about it!

GERT. I have nothing to do with the past: 'tis the present that concerns me. All I know, and all I care about is, that my papa wishes to have my portrait, and I'm determined it shall be painted for him immediately! Let's see, now; who was the artist who painted Julia Montague's for her? I've got his card in my room; I'll run and fetch it. (*talking to herself as she goes out.*) He must mind and make a striking likeness; yes, he shall take me in my tarlatan dress, with plaid ribbons, and wild flowers in my hair—oh, how nice! [Exit, C. and L.]

MRS. M. Hum! I'm totally at a loss to account for this sudden revival of paternal affection on the part of your

worthy husband. I have it—I have it! It's the commencement of some diabolical scheme to rob us of our Gertrude! He knows she is our only comfort, and he evidently wishes to take her from us.

LADY F. Do you really think that such can be his motive?

MRS. M. I'm sure of it, Florence. But the monster shan't succeed? He'll find his match in me!

Re-enter GERTRUDE, C. from L.

GERT. (C.) Here's the address, mamma. (*reading.*) Mr. Vandyke Smith.

LADY F. (*coldly.*) 'Tis needless, child.

GERT. (*amazed.*) Mamma!

LADY F. 'Tis needless, I say. [*Exit, C. and L.*]

GERT. Needless! and why, I should like to know?

MRS. M. Because we have altered our minds on the subject of your portrait.

GERT. Have you, indeed? Then I beg to inform you that *I* have not altered mine. Surely a father has a right to have a portrait of his child, if he pleases? If I were ugly, I could understand your refusing; but as I happen to be nothing of the sort, I insist upon my portrait being painted, and sent to papa, directly! directly! directly!

(*stamping.*)

MRS. M. (*aside.*) Dear, dear! the child's a downright termagant—a positive volcano! Ah, I was just like her at her age. (*aloud.*) Come here, miss, mind me, don't get in a passion, and we'll do whatever you please—there!

GERT. Will you, really? Then do you know I've an idea; just now, while I was looking for the painter's address, it occurred to me that the portrait might be a long while painting, and that as papa is just on the eve of going abroad, it mightn't be finished soon enough. Besides, it mightn't be exactly like me; (*archly.*) therefore, I think that one of the very best methods of enabling papa to form a correct idea as to his daughter's personal appearance, would be to send him *the original!*

MRS. M. (*starting.*) What, miss, are you mad?

GERT. Not in the least, grandma. Don't you see that

papa might refuse his consent to the stiff, formal request you have made in your letter, and then, you know, I couldn't get married.

MRS. M. And supposing you couldn't, where would be the great harm?

GERT. (*tragically.*) Harm, you cruel granma! do you know that were anything to prevent my marriage with Walter (*with an affectation of grief.*) I—I should not long survive the disappointment!

MRS. M. Bless my soul, I had no idea you were so far gone as all that.

GERT. Yes, but I am though!

MRS. M. Well, well, we must see what can be done! I begin to think you're right about the letter. He might refuse his consent, on purpose to annoy us; whereas if you were to make the request in person, he could refuse nothing to such a wheedling, coaxing rogue, like yourself; fathers are so easily talked over!

GERT. (*aside.*) And so are granma's. (*aloud.*) You consent then?

MRS. M. I don't exactly see how I can help myself.

GERT. That's a dear old granny! Now I'll run and ask mamma.

MRS. M. No—no—no—(*aside.*) Florence mustn't know that I've altered my opinion so suddenly. (*aloud.*) Your mother did not approve in the first instance of your sending your portrait, and you know, when once she has made up her mind on a subject she can never be induced to alter it.

GERT. Well then, we must invent some excuse for my going to London; by the bye, where does papa live?

MRS. M. No. 40, Curzon street, May Fair.

GERT. Thank you! (*going*) But I say, granma, I can't go to London by myself; suppose you were to come with me to papa's?

MRS. M. (*horrified.*) I! Heaven forbid, child! No, no! Jane shall go with you.

GERT. Oh, very well! (*rings bell.*) on R. H. table.

Miss Benson
JANE, enters L. from C.

Jane, put on your bonnet, and bring me mine.

[Exit JANE C. and L.]

Enter LADY FLORENCE, C. from L.

LADY F. (*down L. H.*) Why, Gertrude, where are you going?

GERT. You see, granma has just discovered that she's quite out of Berlin wool—and I find I require ever so many things—so I'm going to town with Jane to lay in a stock.

MRS. M. (*aside.*) The little hypocrite.

JANE *has entered C. from L. with shawl, bonnet, &c., which GERTRUDE puts on before glass.*

LADY F. I have been thinking, mother, over what you said on the subject of the portrait, and I have come to the conclusion that your arguments were perfectly unanswerable.

MRS. M. (*embarrassed.*) Oh! You think so?

LADY F. Nothing, I presume, has occurred to alter your opinion?

MRS. M. Oh, dear no! I always maintained that the portrait should not be sent; so we have therefore resolved (*confused.*) upon not sending the portrait.

GERT. (*aside.*) And have decided upon substituting the original. (*kisses her mother.*) Come Jane, run, or we shall lose the train.

(*Runs off C. and R. followed by JANE; LADY FLORENCE and MRS. MEDDLETON go up watching her.*)

SCENE II.—*A Richly Furnished Saloon—first grooves.*

Thomas, a SERVANT enters L. with letters; he places table, B. C. and chairs.

SERVANT. What a quantity of letters my master receives. Ah, this it is to be a rich bachelor; although he's not exactly a bachelor, because he's a married man; and he's not exactly a married man, because he's separated from his wife; but married man or bachelor he seems to lead a very gay life.

Enter SIR CHARLES HOWARD, R. 1 E.

Your letters, sir!

(*gives them and exit L.*)

SIR C. Hum! plenty of invitations. (*sits.*) Breakfast at Lord Goathead's, dinner at Sir Geoffry Mardun's, supper at Palmyre's, the little French Actress—I can't accept all! (*yawns.*) I wonder what ails me to-day? I don't seem the thing at all! Suffering from a fit of the blues, I suppose! and yet in my case, there's no excuse for such a malady: rich, unfettered, free, after having worn the chains of wedlock, what can I wish for more? No wife to look black at me when I come home late! no mother-in-law to worry my life out. (*bitterly.*) Oh that delightful Mrs. Meddleton, with her peacocks's voice and parrot's nose! The very thought of that fascinating old female makes my flesh creep. (*searching among letters.*) No letter from Richmond! 'Tis true there has been no time for an answer, my own letter couldn't have got there till this morning.

Enter WALTER, L. H. 1 E., in full dress and white gloves.

What, Walter! can I believe my eyes?

WALTER. Yes, my dear Sir Charles! safe again in old England.

SIR C. But, my dear fellow, what a buck you are! You don't mean to say you've got yourself up in this extensive manner merely to pay me a visit.

WALTER. (*somewhat embarrassed.*) Yes; I have though! You see, the business I'm upon—a—a—renders full dress indispensable.

SIR C. Zounds! my dear fellow, you alarm me.

WALTER. A—a—can't you guess what it is?

SIR C. Haven't the remotest conception!

WALTER. Then, I suppose I had better come to the point at once.

SIR C. (*resuming his seat.*) I'm all attention! (*offering a cigar.*) Take a Lopez, they're first rate.

WALTER. No, I'll avoid a cigar till my business is over, for fear the whole affair may end in smoke.

SIR C. Go on, my dear fellow! is it such a very complicated affair?

WALTER. Well—not exactly—its you see—well, here goes! I returned from abroad last night; this morning, the

weather being cold and wet, I said to myself, suppose I take a little trip into the country! You're listening?

SIR C. With the greatest interest, I assure you! Well?

WALTER. After hesitating between several charming localities, it suddenly occurred to me—suppose I go to—what's its name?

SIR C. A very lovely spot, through I don't remember having been there.

WALTER. Oh, it wasn't merely the beauty of the scenery which attracted me; you know, when one has friends, relations, whom one has not seen for three years, a—a—you understand?

SIR C. (*puzzled.*) Not at present.

WALTER. (*painfully embarrassed.*) Bless me, how hot it is here!

SIR C. Perhaps you'd like to take something?

WALTER. No, I thank you! I—I—Well, as I was saying—

Enter SERVANT, L. 1 E.

SERVANT. (*announcing.*) The Honourable Mr. Leicester Fluttermore.

WALTER. (*aside.*) The deuce take the fellow! just as I was getting on so nicely. (*crosses to R.*)

Enter the HONOURABLE MR. LEICESTER FLUTTERMORE, L. 1 E.

FLUT. Good morning, Sir Charles! hope I'm not disturbing you.

SIR C. Oh, dear, no! Permit me to introduce you to one of my most intimate friends, Captain Walter Maydenblush!

FLUT. (*bowing.*) Charmed to make his acquaintance.

SIR C. But how is it you're here so soon? I hope you've not come to say you're not coming.

FLUT. No, no; 'pon honour! The fact is, I must tell you, that I have lately made the conquest of a devilish pretty little fair haired thing, quite a little gem! The fact is, I played my cards in such a way that she could not resist me.

WALTER. (*R. aside.*) There's nothing particularly bashful about this gentleman.

FLUT. (*continuing.*) The little creature has only one fault, she's so devilish awkward before strangers; however, she only requires coaching, then she'll soon get rid of her awkwardness, so knowing you were going to have some "tip top sawyers" to dinner to-day, I thought I'd just drop over and ask your permission to bring her with me.

SIR C. Since you wish it, I shall be happy to be introduced to the young person in question.

FLUT. I'll instantly do myself the pleasure of calling for her. Ta, ta! for the moment. (*going towards door, shaking his hand to WALTER.*) Aurevoir—Mr.—Mr. Smith. [*Exit L.*]

WALTER. I suppose that's what your town people call a nice young man.

SIR C. My dear fellow, it's a genus of which specimens are continually to be met with; the one who has just left us is perhaps a trifle more candid than most of his tribe.

WALTER. There's one thing I envy him, and that is the excellent opinion he appears to entertain of himself. If I only had his self possession, I should throw myself coolly upon this chair—take a cigar, (*suiting the action to the word.*) and say, "My dear friend, you've a charming daughter! I love her! she adores me! I have already her consent and that of her mother! and now I'm come to ask for yours!"

SIR C. Walter, you surely can't be serious?

WALTER. (*jumping up, astonished.*) By Jove—I've done it! (*rises.*) passed the Rubicon, without knowing it!

SIR C. (*laughing.*) You mean to say that you're in love with my daughter, Gertrude?

WALTER. Frantically! horribly in love with her!

SIR C. And that she returns your affection?

WALTER. Ardently, passionately!

SIR C. You cannot be in earnest? Gertrude is a mere child! why she isn't fourteen yet!

WALTER. I beg your pardon! she's turned sixteen; though perhaps, you are trying to keep down your own age.

SIR C. No, no! the thing's absurd! impossible! I can't believe it!

WALTER. But when I solemnly assure you—

SIR C. (*interrupting him.*) Besides, the friendship and affection I have ever entertained for you, would of themselves prevent me from allowing you to plunge headlong into an alliance, which the vicinity of that detestable mother Meddleton, would straightway convert in a purgatory.

WALTER. Many thanks, Sir Charles, for your kind consideration; but believe me, your mother-in-law has considerably softened down since you last saw her; added to which, I assure you that I am too seriously attached to your daughter, to allow any obstacle, however dreadful, to prevent our union! My dear sir, if you only knew how lovely your daughter has grown—

SIR C. (*somewhat moved.*) So I am told. I am proud and happy to hear it! and hope to judge for myself before long. You've seen my wife, of course?

WALTER. I have! and I'm certain that, when you have conferred with her on the subject—

SIR C. (*bitterly.*) I see it all now! This marriage of your's is a mere feint, a mere pretext, to bring about an interview.

WALTER. I assure you—

SIR C. But no, Walter, this ruse shall not succeed. (*somewhat agitated.*) Six years ago, on my return from a long journey, I made a step towards a reconciliation with Lady Florence; I accepted an invitation to a ball at which I knew she would be present; I accosted her in a voice which, I am not ashamed to say, trembled with emotion. Will you believe it, sir, Lady Florence answered me in cold, sarcastic accents, and treated me as a perfect stranger! From that moment my mind was made up—'tis she who has willed it so! But no more of this subject, I beg.

WALTER. (*aside.*) It's slower work here than at Richmond.

Re-enter the HONORABLE MR. LEICESTER FLUTTERMORE, L.

FLUT. Here I am, Sir Charles, my little friend will be here presently. I met several of our party on the way.

Enter ALLEMBOURNE and GUESTS, L. 1 E.

By the bye, old fellow, can't you find us a Lady Howard No. 2, to preside on this occasion? We must have some fair hostess to grace the festive board, though if we can't get No. 2, we're not going to have No. 1, for that would be rather a cooler to the entertainment.

SIR C. Gently—gently, sir! I must beg that you will not allude to my wife, in any of your remarks.

FLUT. Ha, ha! 'pon my honour, Charley, one would think you look upon your wife as one of the nine muses!

WALTER. (*aside. R.*) Is this facetious individual aware that he's talking of one of my relations?

SIR C. (*evidently struggling with suppressed anger.*) Fluttermore, we haven't sat down to dinner yet; but, to judge from your conversation, one would think we're at desert!

WALTER. (*aside.*) It's astonishing what a violent inclination I feel to pull that young gentleman by the nose.

FLUT. Not at all, my dear boy; my conversation is quite clear. I flatter myself I know Lady Howard; I've met her once or twice at balls, and so forth. She isn't a bad sort of woman, still there was something dayvlish disagreeable about her.

SIR C. (*approaching FLUTTERMORE.*) My dear fellow, I have a little secret to impart to you. (*puts his arm through FLUTTERMORE'S, and brings him to front of stage.*) You have thought proper to speak disrespectfully of a lady who bears my name; and for whom I have an esteem.—In our present position the world might possibly think it strange that I should fight with you on my wife's account; nevertheless, in the present instance and state of my feelings, I consider it to be my duty. I have only to request that whatever the consequences may be, the real motive of this encounter may be concealed. (*aloud, gaily leaving his arm and walking up.*) Shall we arrange that little affair to morrow morning?

FLUT. (*coolly.*) Whenever you please, my dear fellow!

SIR C. And our friend, Walter, here, will see to it. (*takes WALTER by the arm and speaks, aside.*) And now, gentlemen, what say you to adjourn to the Billiard Room. It will just fill up the time agreeably between this and dinner

(SIR CHARLES and WALTER go up c. GUESTS go from table to R. H.)

FLUT (*aside*.) I shall stop and dine, for I expect my little charmer—not a bad joke, to eat a man's dinner one day, and then to wing him the next, if one can; it will send me up a hundred per cent in the market. (*aloud and turning to WALTER*.) Now, Mr. What's your name, shall we adjourn and settle this affair de plaisir.

[*Exeunt FLUTTERMORE and GUESTS. R. 1 E.*]

WALTER. (*grasping Sir Charles' hand*.) Bravo, Sir Charles, this is as it should be! [*Exit after GUESTS, R.*]

SIR C. I'll fight the fellow, though I should not wish the reason to escape, because the world would believe that I still loved my wife, and I might appear ridiculous.

(*seats himself R. H. of table.*)

Enter THOMAS, the footman, showing in GERTRUDE, followed by JANE, L.

GERT. (*to FOOTMAN*.) 'Tis needless, Sir Charles does not know me. [*Exit FOOTMAN L. H.*] Jane, you will wait for me outside. [*Exit, JANE L.*] 'Tis he—'tis my father! How my heart beats! He doesn't see me. (*coughs*.) Hem, Sir!

SIR C. (*laying down paper, which he had taken up*.) A young girl. Ah! I remember! no doubt the "perfect gem" Mr. Fluttermore spoke about. (*aloud*.) Come here my good girl! I have been told to expect you.

GERT. Expect me! you must be mistaken, sir.

SIR C. No, not at all. (*aside*.) So young, so ingenuous; 'tis impossible! that miserable boaster must have lied!

GERT. (*aside*.) He does not even ask me to take a chair.

SIR C. My dear girl, you interest me deeply; I can give you no better proof of the sympathy I feel for you than by advising you to leave this spot at once—it is no place for you.

GERT. (*aside*.) Is it possible he can send me away thus? (*aloud*.) No place for me, sir? Surely you do not know who I am! you mistake me for some one else!

SIR C. Are you not—(*pauses*.)

GERT. I am your daughter, sir.

SIR C. My daughter!

GERT. Yes, and you are my father! (*falling in his arms*.)

SIR C. (*folding her in his arms.*) My child! my little Gertrude! (*kisses her.*) Take off your bonnet and shawl that I may look at you! (*she takes them off, placing them on table.*) How beautiful you have grown! (*taking her hand in his.*)

GERT. (*significantly.*) Like my mother, am I not?

SIR C. True, dear child, you are—you are; but tell me, to what unforeseen occurrence am I indebted for this happiness? (*they sit.*)

GERT. Well, you must know, papa, that I've long been dying to know you; for really it was too bad that a girl like me shouldn't know her own father, wasn't it now? However I learnt, this morning, from my cousin Walter that you were in town, and I was turning over in my mind all sorts of schemes for coming to see you, when suddenly your letter arrived. Oh, dear papa, if you only knew the pleasure it caused me; me who had always imagined that you did not love—that you never thought of your little Gertrude! So I insisted upon it that sending you my portrait was not enough, because, you know, although you could have seen the portrait, the portrait couldn't have seen you; and the portrait, you know, was Gertrude, and Gertrude was determined to see her father!

SIR C. (*wiping away a tear.*) My darling child!

GERT. Well, grandma at last admitted the justice of my arguments.

SIR C. (*smiling.*) Indeed! that rather surprises me.

GERT. Oh, as for that, I can do what I like with her.

SIR C. Indeed! you surprise me still more.

GERT. (*continuing.*) So I put on my bonnet, got into the train, and learnt, for the first time in my life, that there is one thing in the world which goes faster than the express, and that is the heart of a child who is on her way to embrace her father.

SIR C. (*in a voice choked with emotion.*) My Gertrude! My own dear child!

GERT. Don't cry, papa, or else you'll make me cry, too, and then my tears will prevent me seeing you. Ah! I quite forgot I had another and more selfish motive in paying you this visit; I came to ask your consent to—

SIR C. To what?

GERT. To my marriage with my cousin Walter. You didn't know I was going to be married, did you?

SIR C. Then it's a more serious affair than I imagined.

GERT. Oh, it's a very serious affair, papa. But hasn't Walter told you all about it?

SIR C. Yes; he just now made his demand in due form, but I looked upon it as a joke. I proved to him, satisfactorily, that such an alliance was equally impossible on both sides.

GERT. (*abruptly.*) And what did he say?

SIR C. Nothing particular.

GERT. Nothing particular! (*getting into a passion.*) Do you mean to say that he didn't throw himself at your feet—that he didn't blow his brains out?

SIR C. No, my dear, he did not go such extremes.

GERT. He's a pretty sort of a lover! However, I'm not going to give it up so easily; I've made up my mind to marry him, and I insist upon—(*suddenly altering her manner.*) Oh, papa, forgive me! I thought I was talking to grandma.

SIR C. My darling Gertrude!

GUESTS. (*outside, R. H. 1 E., approaching.*) Ha! ha! ha! A devilish good joke, ha! ha! ha!

SIR C. (*aside.*) Confusion! I had quite forgotten those fellows. 'Twere better that Gertrude should not see them. (*aloud.*) My dear child, some gentlemen are coming here—you had better step into this room for a little while.

(*door in flat, L. C.*)

GERT. Oh, how annoying! You won't be long, though, will you, papa? I have so much to tell you.

SIR C. I'll rejoin you, dear, as soon as I can get rid of them. (*shows her into room L. C.*)

GERT. (*as she goes out.*) What a beautiful papa he is!

[*Exit L. C.*]

Enter ALLEMBOURNE, FLUTTERMORE, and GUESTS,
R. 1 E.

ALLEM. Ha! ha! ha! it's all arranged. I'll back Sir Charles, three to two. (*sees bonnet on table R. C.*) Holloa! gentlemen, our worthy host has had company during our absence.

FLUT. Female company! The sly old fox! I'll wager then, that my charmer's arrived. Now, gentlemen, I'll introduce you to something superior to the three graces and the nine muses rolled into one.

SIR C. Mr. Fluttermore, you are mistaken.

FLUT. Not in the least. Fair play, if you please; the young lady in question belongs to me, and I claim her.

ALLEM. That's but fair. Fluttermore for once is right, and we must have her out.

GUESTS. (R.) We must have her out!

FLUT. Of course we must. Now I'll lay a cool hundred she's in that room.

ALLEM. Then I'll undertake the office of presenting her to the company.

SIR C. Mr. Allembourne, I beg—

ALLEM. Aha! I'll unkennel the little beauty. Yo ho! (*goes to room L. C., opens door and discovers GERTRUDE.*) Here she is, gentlemen; allow me to introduce—

SIR C. (*sternly, and taking Gertrude's hand, leads her forward.*) My daughter, gentlemen!

The GUESTS, overcome with confusion, bow respectfully to GERTRUDE.

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*The Interior of the Villa at Richmond. Same as Scene 1st, Act 1st.*

LADY FLORENCE and JANE discovered taking off GERTRUDE'S bonnet and shawl.

LADY F. (L. *affectionately.*) You naughty girl, to cause us such uneasiness! How wrong of you to remain away four and twenty hours!

GERT. (C.) Ay, but I had your permission, mamma— (JANE goes off C. and L. with bonnet, &c.) for when I sent

Jane home last evening to say I was going to remain in town with papa and Walter, and that we were all going to the opera.

Enter MRS. MEDDLETON *from* L.

You did not send her back to fetch me ; as silence gives consent, you know !

MRS. M. Yes ! and I, miss, was just starting to look for you when you arrived. I shall not allow you to go to London again.

GERT. Dear grandma, if you only knew what a delightful day and evening I spent with papa, I'm sure you wouldn't scold me—hadn't you better make haste and dress ?

MRS. M. Dress—and why, miss ?

GERT. Why ? Why, to do honor to the solemnity of the occasion. I assure you, I turned the time I spent in London to excellent account. All's settled ! that is to say, all is to be settled to-day, at noon.

MRS. M. Has your father given his consent in writing ?

GERT. No !

MRS. M. Then he means to send it, I suppose !

GERT. (*archly.*) No, he doesn't !

MRS. M. Then what does he intend to do ?

GERT. He intends to—bring it ! Papa and Walter are coming down together.

LADY F. (*aside.*) Can it be possible ?

MRS. M. (*angrily.*) You don't mean to say your father will have the audacity to profane this peaceful habitation with his presence.

GERT. Dear me, grandma, one would think you intended to turn papa out of doors.

MRS. M. No, miss ! but I intend to lock myself up in my room until he has left the house.

GERT. How very unpolite of you.

MRS. M. (*getting very angry.*) Unpolite ! I suppose you'd have me go on my knees to my gentleman !

GERT. Grandma ! I beg you won't speak of my papa as "my gentleman ;" and I shall expect you to treat him kindly !

MRS. M. I shan't do anything of the sort, miss !

GERT. I see how it is, she wants to break off my marriage.

MRS. M. No, she doesn't, miss!

GERT. Then, dear grandma, do behave politely to my father; I don't ask you to throw your arms round his neck and kiss him.

MRS. M. Very considerate of you, I'm sure!

GERT. (*continuing.*) I only ask you to treat him with common civility. (*seeing that MRS. MEDDLETON is about to leave the room.*) Oh, now I've offended her. (*aloud, coaxingly.*) Grandma, dear! where are you going?

MRS. M. (*crossly.*) To my room, miss. (*going up.*)

GERT. (*anxiously.*) To your room. But why? (*following her.*)

MRS. M. To dress! to please you, you little tyrant!

[*Exit hastily, c. and L.*

GERT. (*aside.*) Ha, ha! I knew I should gain my point. (*crosses to her mother.*) And you, dear mamma, don't you intend to make some little alteration in your toilet?

LADY F. Why should I do so, child?

GERT. Out of respect to your son-in-law, out of compliment to me; besides, I want papa to think you still more handsome than when he last saw you.

LADY F. My dear, I am sure he will not trouble himself with any such comparison. You say he appeared glad to see you?

GERT. Glad! he was delighted—enraptured! He said I was like you, mamma, only you were taller, and your hair darker. Oh, if you only knew what a deep sigh he gave when he said so.

LADY F. (*endeavouring to appear indifferent.*) And so Walter spent the evening with you and your father?

GERT. Yes! and after questioning us a great deal, papa consented to our marriage; but not till after he had made Walter promise that he would do all in his power to make me happy, and show how much he valued "the little treasure" entrusted to his care. Yes, papa called me a "little treasure;" and papa's a good judge of things, you know; he must be a very good judge to have chosen you, dear mamma!

LADY F. (*smiling.*) Ah, my dear child, he soon became weary of his choice.

GERT. You wouldn't say that if you only knew how highly—how affectionately he spoke of you.

LADY F. (*with an assumption of carelessness.*) Oh, he spoke of me, did he?

GERT. That he did; and showed me your portrait, which he keeps in a little case.

LADY F. (*aside—moved.*) My portrait!

GERT. He spoke once or twice of grandma, too; but it's strange; with her it's quite the contrary; he doesn't seem to like her at all; and I'm sorry to see there's not much love lost between them. I wonder why they dislike each other? ~~X X X X~~

LADY F. Hark! I hear the sound of a carriage approaching.

GERT. (*running to the back—looking off, R. C.*) 'Tis Walter, with papa, who said he would come down by the road, in his brougham, which is such a duck! and such horses, too! You know papa has got such good taste.

LADY F. (*aside.*) Oh, how my heart beats!

GERT. (*imploringly.*) You will receive them, mamma, for my sake, will you not?

LADY F. (*much agitated.*) I have promised to do so, Gertrude, and I will keep my word.

GERT. Dear, dear mamma! (*walks up.*)

(LADY FLORENCE darts a hasty glance towards the glass over the mantel-piece, L., and arranges her hair.)

SERVANT. (*announcing.*) Captain Walter Maydenblush—Sir Charles Howard! [*Exit SERVANT.*]

Enter SIR CHARLES and WALTER, C. from R.

GERT. You are behind time, papa. There's mamma; now come and speak to her. (*takes his hand.*) How your hand trembles!

SIR C. I—I've been walking fast.

GERT. Walking fast! How can you have been walking fast, when you've not been walking at all? Mamma, here is my father.

SIR C. (*bowing, R. C.*) Madam!

LADY F. (*returning his salute, L.*) Sir Charles!

WALTER. (*aside, R.*) Ah, it's his turn to look awkward now. I'm glad there's some one else as shy as I am.

SIR C. I am here, madam, at the earnest entreaty of our daughter, who informed me that you had consented to—to receive me.

LADY F. (*ceremoniously.*) You are welcome, sir.

WALTER. (*seeing GERTRUDE making signs to him—aside.*) Aha! I see. (*aloud to SIR CHARLES and LADY FLORENCE.*) Well, you must have a great deal to talk over about settlements, marriage portions, and such like dry uninteresting matters. I—I dare say the presence of Gertrude and her faithful Walter will only bore you, so we will withdraw awhile.

LADY F. Gertrude!

GERT. Mamma!

LADY F. Stay where you are, my dear.

GERT. But, dear mamma, I—I—

LADY F. I request you will obey me, Gertrude.

GERT. (*evidently vexed.*) Walter, go and gather a bouquet in the garden.

WALTER. Yes, my little rose-bud of a wife. (*aside to SIR CHARLES, who appears ill at ease.*) Come, father-in-law, a little more firmness, I beg. I had no idea you were so shy and so awkward. Why, you're worse than I am. [*Exit c. and L.*

(*Meanwhile LADY FLORENCE has resumed her work, and appears totally unconscious of Sir Charles's presence.*)

GERT. (*aside.*) Well, I'm sure! do they mean to remain all day without speaking to each other? (*aloud.*) Sit down, papa. (*SIR CHARLES places chair at some distance from his wife, R. C. GERTRUDE moves it nearer to LADY FLORENCE, who is L. C.*) So—and now I'll sit between you. (*sits c.*) There, isn't it nice, now? (*to SIR CHARLES.*) How happy you must be to find yourself at home again.

SIR C. Yes, darling, yes.

GERT. You see, there's nothing changed.

SIR C. (*looking towards LADY FLORENCE.*) No, nothing. (*their eyes meet; LADY FLORENCE looks another way.*) The same furniture—the same hangings.

GERT. My dear papa, have you come down to Richmond merely to talk about furniture and hangings?

SIR C. True, Gertrude, I have come, in the first place

to thank your mother for the pleasure she has afforded me in allowing me to—to become a witness of your happiness.

LADY F. (*distantly.*) You are Gertrude's father, Sir Charles, and the law therefore rendered it a duty on my part.

GERT. Law! Dear, dear, just now I had to scold papa for talking like an upholsterer, and now you are beginning to talk like a lawyer's clerk. Confess the truth now, dear mamma, you know how delighted you were when I told you that papa—

LADY F. (*interrupting her hastily.*) Had not forgotten his child—I—I admit it, and 'tis for that child alone—

SIR C. (*reproachfully.*) Alone!

LADY F. That Sir Charles has consented to share, for a few moments, our calm, monotonous existence.

GERT. I am sure papa would not find our way of living at all monotonous. The country must seem so beautiful after a life spent in smoky streets. Then of an evening, there's conversation round the cheerful fire, and with me you know there's never any fear of the conversation lagging; I'd undertake to keep it alive! (*stopping and looking at them.*) However, I should prefer not having it all to myself! (*pause.*) I should like to hear *you two* say something, if it was only that you both loved me.

LADY F. } (*together.*) Dear, dear child!

SIR C. }

(*Each advances a hand to GERTRUDE, who clasps them in hers and attempts to place their hands in one another, when they are slowly withdrawn.*)

GERT. (*aside.*) I nearly did it! Never mind, it was only the first time of asking. Now do talk, do say something, talk about me, about my marriage.

LADY F. Sir Charles has, I believe, no objection to raise on his side.

SIR C. No! the only one which ever suggested itself to me, was that Gertrude is somewhat young to take upon herself the duties, the anxieties of a wife.

LADY F. You are doubtless right, Sir Charles, but Gertrude having, all her life, been deprived of her natural protector, it appeared incumbent upon us to place her as early as possible under the protection of a husband.

GERT. (*reproachfully.*) Yes, mamma! but my natural protector has returned to me now—hasn't he, papa?

SIR C. He has! (*taking GERTRUDE'S hand.*) He has, my child.

LADY F. For a day, possibly.

SIR C. A day, madam?

LADY F. However, Sir Charles, I am merely explaining my own conduct; it is not my intention to reproach you with yours.

GERT. (*eagerly.*) There, papa, you hear—nobody wishes to reproach you with yours.

SIR C. (*sadly.*) And yet, Gertrude, I deserve it but too well, for ever having forgotten that I had a child, a daughter, who must sooner or later need a father's protection. (*angrily.*) Ah, Mrs. Meddleton, 'tis you who have caused all this!

GERT. (*eagerly.*) No, no, papa—it was I?

SIR C. You, darling?

GERT. Yes! Walter told me all about it. It seems that I used to be a regular little termagant when I was a child—but you can't think how much I'm improved since then—besides, I've got all my teeth now, and I don't scream for every thing I want; and do you know, that to keep you here with us, I'd become as mild and gentle as mamma herself—there! I can't promise more than that, can I? Besides, if I am improved, 'tis mamma you have to thank for it, 'tis she who has gradually converted a fractious, noisy little girl into—

SIR C. (*interrupting.*) An angel!

GERT. No, no, papa! if there is an angel in the family, 'tis not me. (*embracing her mother.*) 'Tis mamma!

SIR C. (*rising in considerable emotion.*) Yes, Florence, you, I am sure, would have forgiven, would have forgotten all!

LADY F. (*rising.*) Sir Charles!

SIR C. Suffer me, at any rate, to indulge the hope—the belief that I may yet be pardoned! Do you know, that on re-entering this house, the only place in which I now discover that I have ever known true happiness, the last twelve years of my existence seemed but the recollection of some feverish dream, and my thoughts flew back to

the days when I remembered the affection I had for you—

LADY F. (*affectionately.*) Affection — Char — Sir Charles—

Enter WALTER running, c. from L.

WALTER. Grandma wants somebody! I don't know who, but she is calling out most lustily.

LADY F. Gertrude, you forgot that Mrs. Meddleton might require your assistance. I, too, have some orders to give—you will excuse me, Sir Charles, if I leave you awhile. [*Exit c. and L.*]

GERT. (*to WALTER as she goes out.*) You couldn't have chosen a worse moment for interrupting us.

WALTER. I—oh, dear! how unfortunate!

GERT. I'll be back directly, papa; I'm only going to grandma. (*GERTRUDE kisses her hand to her father and goes off, L. c. and L.*)

WALTER. Well, how have you got on?

SIR C. Fairly—very fairly, indeed.

WALTER. (R.) And what do you think of your wife, after your long absence?

SIR C. (R.) A 'charming creature, Walter. 'Pon my life, I think I must have been out of my mind for the last twelve years.

WALTER. But how did she seem—what did she say?

SIR C. Well, she appeared to be as much agitated—as I confess, I was myself; but I fear the wrong she has endured at my hands cannot so easily be forgotten; and who knows but that it is her intention to lure me to her feet, and then—

WALTER. Leave you, then? No, no, Lady Florence was never a coquette! and I'll answer for it she has no such intention.

SIR A. Possibly! but then she would never consent to leave her mother, and in that case I need not say—

WALTER. My dear fellow! I tell you your mother-in-law is an altered being; you wouldn't know her again! she is no longer the same veritable, meddling, mischief-making personage who used to cause dissention between you and your wife! She's tamed down into a quiet, mild, inoffensive creature! The fact is, she's not a mother-in-

law at all now—she's a lamb! a perfect lamb for gentleness and amiability! Ah! here she comes, you'll now have an opportunity of judging for yourself.

Enter MRS. MEDDLETON in grand toilette, c. from L.

MRS. M. (L. C., *very stiffly*.) Oho, Sir Charles! you are here, are you?

SIR C. (*bowing*.) Yes, madam! having been informed of my daughter's forthcoming marriage, I eagerly embraced the opportunity of paying you my respects.

MRS. M. Indeed! your respects have been so long coming, I fear they must have caught cold on the road.

SIR C. (*restraining himself*.) It would appear then, madam, that neither time nor absence has induced you to forget wrongs which—

MRS. M. Which nothing can efface, sir. My granddaughter has requested me to receive you—I do receive you. She requested that I would behave cordially and politely towards you—I have done so, sir, to the letter.

WALTER. (*aside*.) That you have with a vengeance.

MRS. M. Well then, Sir Charles, this is all you have to expect from me. You approve of this marriage it appears—so much the better: you give your consent—nothing can be more satisfactory. The preliminaries will be settled at noon; I have therefore ordered your carriage for one. Sir Charles, I have the honour to wish you a very good morning! [*Curtseys formally, and exit, c. and L.*]

SIR C. (*after a pause*.) This is your notion of a lamb, is it? I should say a hyæna would be nearer the mark.

WALTER. (*confused*.) I declare I never was more deceived in my whole life. Can't understand it at all.

SIR C. Yes, this angelic specimen of lamb-like meekness has the impertinence to turn her daughter's husband out of doors.

WALTER. Well, that last allusion of hers did sound uncommonly like a genteel notice to quit.

SIR C. A notice which I'll take good care I'll not give her the trouble of repeating. I'll return to London this very instant.

WALTER. (*eagerly*.) You'll do nothing of the kind. I am about to become your son-in-law, and I insist, in my

own name, and in your daughter's, that you assist at our wedding, and give us your paternal blessing. Even admitting that Mrs. Meddleton is an ogress, that's no reason why you should revenge yourself upon your wife and daughter by walking off in this manner. No, no! were I in your place, do you know what I'd do? I'd carry off my wife—I'd carry off my daughter—I'd carry off my son-in-law!—and the only person I'd not carry off should be my mother-in-law!

SIR C. I am not yet certain that my wife would allow me to carry her off.

WALTER. You have not made the attempt yet; make it at once—she's here.

Enter LADY FLORENCE, C. from L.

SIR C. Lady Florence, I have a few words to say to you that—

LADY F. (*coldly.*) Indeed, sir! Is it possible that you can have anything more to communicate to me?

SIR C. (*surprised.*) This tone again! How am I to account for this sudden change?

Enter MRS. MEDDLETON, C. from L., goes down R.

Aha! I understand. Mrs. Meddleton has been at work.

MRS. M. (*R.—sneeringly.*) She has, Sir Charles; and has succeeded in saving her child from the precipice which lay before her.

SIR C. (*C.*) Madam!

WALTER. (*R. C.*) Be quiet! You're in a passion, and might forget yourself. I'll talk to her a little. Mrs. Meddleton, am I set you down as one of those birds of evil omen who delight in darkness, and who never sing but amid the din of the storm, and the howl of the tempest. (*to SIR CHARLES, who attempts to stop him.*) Allow me to go on; you see I'm perfectly calm. I repeat, madam, are we to look upon you as the spirit of dissension, let loose upon this unfortunate family for the purpose of setting its members by the ear?

MRS. M. How dare you insult me, sir, with such a question?

Enter GERTRUDE, C. from L., dressed in white.

GERT. (*aside.*) What can be the matter now?

(*remains at back, and listens.*)

LADY F. (L.) Sir Charles, really—

MRS. M. Florence, be quiet! I flatter myself I can take my own part without any ally. (*producing newspaper.*) Besides, there's a little paragraph in the paper which will speak for itself. Listen. (*reads*) "Yesterday an encounter took place between Sir Charles Howard and the Honourable Mr. Leicester Fluttermore."

WALTER. Well—proceed.

MRS. M. (*continuing.*) "The last named gentleman being slightly wounded, the seconds were of opinion that the affair had proceeded far enough."

WALTER. (*interrupting.*) Well, there's nothing very extraordinary in that, is there?

MRS. M. (*stiffly.*) Sir, I have not yet finished!

WALTER. (*bowing.*) Proceed, madam, I beg.

MRS. M. (*continuing.*) "The avowed motive of this encounter was some dispute about a race-horse."

WALTER. Ah, there you see!

MRS. M. I have not yet finished, sir!

WALTER. Proceed, I beg, madam.

MRS. M. (*continuing.*) "But it is currently reported that the real cause of quarrel is not a quadruped, but a biped, and moreover wears petticoats." What do you think of that for a gentleman whose daughter is about to be married?

GERT. (*coming forward.*) I think I can throw a little light upon all this. I had promised Walter to keep it a secret; but now that I hear my father unjustly condemned, I consider it my duty to inform you that he was perfectly right in fighting this duel.

MRS. M. What, miss?

GERT. Yes, grandma; and if I had only been a man, I'd have been his second myself!

WALTER. But my future wife being of the feminine gender, I acted as her substitute on the occasion.

MRS. M. Do you mean to say, sir, that you acted as second to a reprobate who was fighting for some—

GERT. (*calmly.*) Who was fighting for my mother.

MRS. M. Your mother?

LADY F. For me! (*rising and coming forward, L.*)

GERT. Yes, mamma. An impertinent fop had the insolence to speak slightly of you in the presence of your husband, who challenged and punished the coxcomb for jesting on the subject of one whom he so esteems.

LADY F. Can I believe—

SIR C. Gertrude has told you but the simple truth. I at first imagined that I was merely fighting from a selfish feeling of wounded honour; but at the moment my weapon was levelled at my adversary, I felt that another and a better sentiment had caused my resentment—love and respect for you, Florence. And though these feelings may for a time have slumbered in my heart, believe me they have never—never been dead.

LADY F. He still loves me!

SIR C. And now, Florence, will not this avowal of my affection induce you to forgive wrongs, which, alas, I humbly acknowledge, and for which I now humbly solicit your pardon.

LADY F. (*holding out her hand to him.*) Charles—dear Charles!

SIR C. (*clasping her in his arms, and embracing her passionately.*) Florence—my wife!

GERT. Well, is nobody going to take any notice of me? Am I, now that I have both father and mother. (*crossing between them.*) to be treated like an orphan! (*they both embrace her.*) At last! Then we're all united? how happy we shall be! We'll stay here, won't we papa?

SIR C. (*somewhat embarrassed.*) Well, my child, you see this villa is rather too far from town; besides, you and your mother have been long deprived of the pleasure of the metropolis—my affairs require my frequent—

MRS. M. I understand exactly. (*aloud.*) Let no one think of stirring! I alone will remove!

LADY F. You, mother?

GERT. You, grandma!

SIR C. Believe me, madam, I could not think of allowing—

MRS. M. My mind is made up! I have, I am aware, one or two little failings; still I think my heart is in the right place.

LADY F. But my dear mother—

MRS. M. Not another word! my mind is made up! I shall pop in now and then, like a summer storm, which, though at times is disagreeable in itself, is often welcome to the monotony of an unclouded sky.

Enter SERVANT, ^{John} C. R. from R.

SERVANT. Mr. Lyttleton Coke, the lawyer, is below.

GERT. The lawyer! what do we want with lawyers?

WALTER. (R. C.) To draw up the deeds and documents connected with your marriage.

GERT. (C.) My marriage? Ha! ha! ha! that's a very good joke!

WALTER. (*alarmed.*) Gracious me! what do you mean, Gertrude?

GERT. Why, you see, my dear cousin, now that my scheme has succeeded, and my parents are re-united, I don't see that there's any necessity for my getting married at all!

WALTER. (*offended.*) Now, really Miss Gertrude, this is very unkind of you! Yesterday I didn't care for you, and yet I sacrificed myself to please you, and now that you see I can't exist without you, you coolly talk of not getting married at all!

GERT. (*archly.*) You really love me, then?

WALTER. Go along with you! how can you ask such a question?

LADY F. (*laughingly.*) Take care, Gertrude! The cause that led to our reconciliation was your marriage; if you alter *your* mind it may become necessary that I should alter *mine*. (*pretends to leave her husband's arm.*)

GERT. (*eagerly.*) No, no! then—I'll be married. I'll be married.

WALTER. (*pretending to raise difficulties.*) Stop! stop! unless you're quite certain that you love me, I don't know whether I ought to consent?

GERT. Don't be alarmed, Walter! I'll see what I can do for you, and as a proof of my favourable intentions in your behalf, allow me, ladies and gentlemen, (*to group on*

stage). to present to you my husband; and, as papa has called me his little treasure, I hope, Walter, I shall be such a good wife, that *you* will like to call me by that name also; and if I should be so fortunate in time, as to merit such a name from *you*, (*to audience.*) then no one on earth will be so proud and so happy as your Little Treasure.

MRS. M., WALTER, GERTRUDE, SIR C., LADY F.

R.

R. C.

C.

L. C.

L.

CURTAIN.

